

FISH and WILDLIFE COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

Meeting Date: October 13, 2016

Agenda Item: Millage Conservation Easement (R3)

Division: Wildlife

Action Needed: Endorsement

Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation: 5 Min

Background

The Millage Conservation Easement proposal is approximately 400 acres of private land in core wintering mule deer habitat along the foothills of the Bridger Mountains north of Bozeman, MT. It is adjacent to the 881 acre Maher Easement, also held by MFWP. The property has been in a family for several generations and has historically allowed generous hunter access. If sold, the likelihood of subdivision and development is extremely high, which would directly impact winter habitat effectiveness. The landowners are supportive of retaining the conservation values of this property.

Public Involvement Process & Results

FWP has not sought any public comment at this time. Upon endorsement from the Commission, FWP would conduct appropriate analysis, public review processes, and negotiations.

Alternatives and Analysis

The preferred alternative is to begin negotiations with the landowner and establish a conservation easement for this parcel. The anticipated benefits of this alternative include preventing subdivision on land in core mule deer winter range and securing hunter access in perpetuity. The parcel is adjacent to 881 acres already in MFWP conservation easement, and to U.S. Forest Service lands.

The “no action” alternative could result in the property selling, and likelihood of subdivision is high. The area is zoned for 1 house per 40 acres with clustering in Gallatin County, which is one of the fastest growing counties in Montana and in the nation. Hunting access could be lost, and mule deer habitat compromised.

Agency Recommendation & Rationale

MFWP recommends the Commission endorse this proposal, allowing field staff to spend time and resources to further negotiate a conservation easement with the landowner. If successful, the conservation easement will protect and maintain high priority wildlife habitat and public access.

Proposed Motion:

I move the Fish & Wildlife Commission endorse this conservation easement project, allowing FWP to initiate negotiations, and to conduct analysis and associated public review.